VALENTI TARGETS 'JFK' THEORISTS

Before Congress, he blasts pic's 'conspiracy peddlers'

BY DENNIS WHARTON

WASHINGTON—Motion Picture Assn. of America prez Jack Valenti yesterday urged Congress to "uncage the JFK assassination documents," but he warned that "weaselly people" will continue promoting conspiracy theories even if it's conclusively proved that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone gunman.

Valenti, who's been on a high-profile campaign to discredit the Oliver Stone film "JFK," told the House Judiciary Committee that he objects to the pic because he fears that viewers, after watching what he called "untruths and falsehoods," will accept Stone's conspiracy theory as though "they have been witness to the gospel ... handed down from Mount Sinai."

The MPAA head, a former aide to President Lyndon B. Johnson, defended as "men of integrity" the Warren Commission, the panel picked by LBJ to investigate the Kennedy assassination. Valenti said he hopes this week's decision by doctors performing the Kennedy autopsy to reiterate their belief that Oswald was the lone gunman will "put a dent in some of the armor of the these conspiracy peddlers."

Valenti said the "JFK murder truth business" has turned into a "major profit-making enterprise.... The Lord only knows how many more conspiratorial badgers are out there burrowing into the entrails of Alice's Nonsense Wonderland, ready to barter their gauzy and grotesque notions for gold in the publishing and movie marketplace."

First-time critic

Valenti noted that he had never before publicly criticized a film during his tenure at MPAA. He claimed that "service to my country" in setting the record straight on the Kennedy assassination is "more important to me than my job.... I can always get another job."

Congress is considering legislation that would open FBI, CIA, Warren Commission and House and Senate files related to the JFK assassination. Without passage of the bill, most of the documents would remain under seal until the year 2029.

The bill has hit a snag because of Justice Dept. opposition to language that gives a special court the authority to appoint an independent commission that would review which JFK documents could be released. Justice believes that the White House should have authority to appoint the commission.

Lawmakers at the hearing were quick to denounce the "JFK" conspiracy angle, although they conceded that they would not be acting

Turn to page 27

5/21/92

VALENTI TARGETS 'JFK' THEORISTS

Continued from page 3

to open assassination files were it not for the pic.

"We are here because of a movie," said Henry Hyde (R-Ill.). "Let's face it." Later, Hyde said he is "learning that the John Birch Society is certainly not alone in suspecting conspiracies behind every event."

Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), who chaired a House investigation of the JFK assassination in the late 1970s, said the Stone film "totally distorted what had actually occurred in Dallas that day."

Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) used the occasion to criticize Warner Bros. for distributing videocassettes of "JFK" to schools. "That would be pretty rotten conduct," said Edwards.

Rep. Craig James (R-Fla.) noted the power of films and pressed Valenti on whether lawmakers should not be "fearful of that industry ... owned by foreign governments."

The MPAA head responded by saying that even though foreigners may own Hollywood studios, it's mostly Americans that are still making the films. Any foreigner attempting to unduly influence the filmmaking process would "be out of business," per Valenti. "So long as there's not a monopoly in Hollywood, you don't need to fear anything," he added.

Daily Variety
May 21, 1992